



Literacy Standards Review Team

Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2016

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines, Iowa

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Beth Baker-Brodersen, Des Moines Area Community College
- Sandra Beisker, Dubuque Community School District
- Lauren Burt, Meredith Corporation
- Bridget Castelluccio, Cedar Rapids Community School District
- Kara Dietrich, Ballard Community School District
- Dixie Forcht, South Tama Community School District
- Carol Glackin, Morningside College
- Mendy Haefs, St. Patrick Elementary School, Sheldon
- Liz Hansen, Grinnell-Newburg Community School District
- Sally Huddle, Iowa Wesleyan University
- Laura Johnson, Grant Wood Area Education Agency
- Heather Lundquist, Atlantic Community School District
- Kelsey Meyer, Grundy Center Community School District
- Kristine Milburn, West Des Moines Community School District
- Erin Miller, Ames Community School District
- Kathy Perret, Northwest Area Education Agency
- Deborah Reed, Iowa Reading Research Center
- Jonathan Rogers, Iowa City Community School District
- Molly Tripp, A-H-S-T Community School District
- Josh Wager, Des Moines Public Schools
- Sarah Brown Wessling, Johnston Community School District

Committee member Vickie Anstey from Griswold Community School District was absent. Also in attendance was Rebecca Bates, a consultant with Midwest Comprehensive Center.

Agenda item: Orientation to our work

Notes:

Members of the Iowa Department of Education began with introductions: Rita Martens, the administrative consultant for the Department of Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum; and Sandy Nelson, with the Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports.

Martens also introduced Kristine Milburn, a K-12 Extended Learning Program (ELP) coordinator and teacher leader for the West Des Moines Community School District; and Liz Hansen, a teacher leader at Grinnell-Newburg Community School District. Milburn and Hansen have been selected as co-chairwomen of the Literacy Standards Review Team. Martens said the two were selected because they live and breathe the implementation of the Iowa Core each day. Each woman briefly introduced herself.

Department of Education Director Ryan Wise gave a brief introduction and spoke about his experiences as a high school history teacher in Omaha when he had the opportunity to work on a standards review and rewrite. He said having rigorous, clear standards is the foundation of good education.

Hansen discussed the charge of the literacy standards review committee. She said the committee will conduct a review of the Iowa Core English language standards: both the k-12 English Language Arts standards and the grades 6-12 Literacy Standards for history, social studies, science and technical subjects. Individuals from a wide range of academia and some who work professionally in the area were selected to review the standards and examine the feedback the committee will receive via an online public survey. The team will study the existing standards and review the infrastructure and support for those standards. It will then determine where improvements can be made and if any changes are needed.

The team will meet in March to gather information and public feedback through an online survey. In April, it will review the feedback results. Meetings in May and June will focus on forming a recommendation that will be forwarded to the State Board of Education.

Martens said team members were not asked or recruited based on whether they support or don't support the current set of standards. Members were asked to maintain an unbiased perspective during their time serving on the team.

Agenda item: Mind Sketching: Introduce Yourself

Notes: Milburn led the group through a concept called mind sketching in which they were read the sentence: "My life: Sketch 5-6 images that I am passionate about, that ignite my soul, that I'd write in a poem about my life."

She explained mind sketching is used to make literacy more accessible to children who live in poverty and that it is literacy as a visual construct.

The group created doodles/sketches they then explained individually to the larger group as an ice breaker.

Agenda item: Background on the Iowa Core Literacy Standards

Notes: Martens provided background on the Iowa Core Literacy Standards. The Iowa Core began in 2005 as a statewide effort to improve teaching and learning. Then DE Director Judy Jeffrey visited each school district in Iowa to determine if students were taking coursework to achieve their dreams. She discovered a disparity in what was being taught across the state. Thus, it was determined a clear set of indicators for higher, quality learning were needed in Iowa. The intent was that the standards relate specifically to the state of Iowa.

The standards as they appear today:

- Literacy and math – Common Core standards and Iowa-specific standards
- Science – Next Generation Science Standards were adopted
- Social studies – the standards that were adopted in 2007-08 are currently being rewritten based on the C3 Framework. There will be a public review in 2017-18.
- 21st Century skills that include civic, financial and health literacy, technology, and employability skills – standards are designed by Iowa teams and the universal constructs

The Iowa Core was the result of multiple legislative acts that date back to 2005. The intent was to level the playing field across the state so that all students were provided with a world class curriculum and prepared for the future.

Martens explained how the Iowa Core and the Common Core merged in various standards areas. The Common Core was developed through the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association, with consultation from Achieve, ACT, College Board, higher education, and an examination of standards from high performing states and countries. The federal government was not involved in the development of standards.

There were three critical factors in the development of standards:

- 1) They must align with college and work expectations.
- 2) They must be clean, understandable and consistent.
- 3) They must be evidence and research based.

The key difference between the Common Core and the Iowa Core is that the Common Core ELA standards are grade specific for k-8, and banded for 9-10 and 11-12. The Iowa Core is grade banded: k-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. They are similar in that neither is a curriculum but a set of shared learning expectations of the knowledge and skills students need in order to succeed.

Martens discussed the path Iowa took to adopt the standards. The Iowa Department of Education was an early signatory of the standards, which designated its participation as "collective development." Iowa education officials were involved in conference calls with writers. They were allowed to provide written feedback with every revision. The lead writers of the Common Core visited Iowa to discuss the document. The State Board of Education then reviewed the Common Core and discussed it. Department of Education employees were then directed to perform an alignment study.

The study used a web-based alignment tool designed by Achieve to compare the Iowa Core and the Common Core and vice versa, line-by-line to see what matched. Mathematics and literacy leaders from the AEA, LEA, higher education and the Department of Ed were involved in the process. They were asked to consider: What was the degree of alignment, and what was not covered by one document versus the other.

All but 7 percent of the Common Core was already in the Iowa Core standards even though the language was different. When it came to literacy concepts, 16 percent did not match. Iowa put more emphasis on the use of technology and media literacy.

The biggest difference between the sets of standards was what was detailed: i.e. in the Common Core, a seventh-grade student should learn to use a semicolon; in the Iowa Core, specific punctuation marks weren't attached to specific grades.

The State Board of Education adopted the Common Core in July 2010, in part, because members knew there would be a plethora of support materials available to teachers and educators that Iowa could use. "We wanted our Iowa teachers to be able to dip into this big pool of materials for additional support," Martens said.

Iowa education officials were allowed to add 15 percent additional content that was specific to the state. Information was used from the alignment student to add this content.

Agenda item: Small group discussion of the standards

Notes: Nelson assigned the team into small groups to review assigned sections of the Iowa Core: k-5; 6-12, and history, social studies, science and technical.

The groups were asked to consider the following questions:

- 1) How do the standards illustrate and reflect the shifts?
- 2) What are the sticking points – hang-ups, issues, problem areas or important things the overall team needs to consider?

Martens said the purpose for the questions was for team members to look and think beyond the standards: i.e. a shift in the mindset of a teacher – what's most important for them to emphasize as they approach curriculum or the content of their instruction.

Agenda item: Report out on the discussion questions

Notes: The subgroups discussed the questions. Each member of the group discussed their thoughts and responses were recorded.

K-5 group responses

Shifts

- Heavy emphasis of student response based on text evidence
- Liked the use and selection of complex text – determination of what complex text is – begin at kindergarten
- Need to have rich tasks/instructions in cross-curricular areas to meet multiple standards
- Use of informational texts 50/50 with literature
- Use of verbs/descriptions through all levels – vertical articulation
- Importance of academic language
- Teacher discussion regarding core standards

Sticking points

- Professional development – the quantity, quality
- Good academic language – using/exposure versus student independence
- Student learning versus activities

- What degree is “mastery,” “topic specific,” “domain specific,” etc.
- IA.1 – want more detail because it’s a very long list of strategies with no change in k-5
- Gaps of volume in standards and using them with strategies
- Assessment correlations and how best to show core understanding
- Wondering about what the impact will be to taking changes/revisions back to teachers

6-12 group responses

Shifts

- Emphasis of technology
- Teacher as a coach, not necessarily standing up in front of class and directing
- Nonfiction text is more clearly defined and emphasized
- Emphasis of complex and primary text
- Emphasis of analysis
- Integration of standards
- Focus on evidence
- Less linear skill development

Sticking points

- Consistency and clarity of the language across the core
- What does college and career readiness really mean? Questions about emphasis
- Widely varied implementations of the core
- Focused on tasks rather than concepts/skills
- World view and ethics in relation to language – make sure they are incorporating and accepting of all ethnicities
- Non-fiction person – across the curriculum
- Application of skills to the real world

Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects group responses

Shifts

- Literacy is the responsibility of all teachers; all content areas have their own “literacy”
- Expands the definition of “texts”
- Vocabulary ought to be linked to specific texts (academic versus disciplinary)
- Reading as writers
- Writing as a process to utilize primary and secondary sources and evidence to create arguments
- Level of rigor and progression of standards
- “Thinking” for students is changing from “knowing” to “how to do”
- Information literacy is essential to evidence citation

Sticking points

- How do we define “text” or “literacy?”
- Should more emphasis be placed on digital source evaluation
- The skill of summary versus paraphrasing – think paraphrasing is easier and should be reversed

- How far do they go in providing guidance on technical subjects – science and technical subjects are lumped together. How are they integrated or should they separate science from these?
- Should fine arts have its own section because it's not a technical subject?
- Questioning is not in grades 6-8 and 9-10 in standard 7. Kids should start answering and asking questions earlier
- Technical writing for digital platform – the standards were written before the digital age
- Images and artifacts as texts – things that students need to recognize: How do we allow students to do this?
- They lack reference to digital and electronic resources. From the standards of outside of education – how do people deal with those to make students college and career ready?
- How do we engage the future? To build the skills of flexibility and adaptability?

Agenda item: Survey, distribution and data gathering

Notes: Brad Niebling, an education program consultant with the Department of Education's Bureau of School Improvement, discussed plans for how the information will be surveyed. He said the department uses data to make decisions and part of the data will come from involving all Iowans in the review process. One of the most sufficient ways to gather data is to develop a public survey, which would allow any Iowan who wants to provide feedback to do so. SurveyMonkey will be the format used to conduct the survey.

Niebling and others have worked to design a survey, which was shown to team members. Niebling said the department utilized some of what it gleaned from experience with the Next Generation Science Standards survey in creating the survey for the literacy standards review.

The survey is designed to ask questions that will help the DE determine whether the responses will help them make decisions that pertain to the task of the committee.

The goals are

- 1) To determine opinions and perceptions of Iowa education stakeholders on the k-12 Iowa Core literacy standards – what do people think of them and what should or shouldn't be included in the standards.
- 2) To determine educator knowledge and understanding of the content in the k-12 Iowa Core literacy standards – this is where they develop survey items and questions to determine people's knowledge and skills.
- 3) To determine professional learning needs to support student learning of the standards
- 4) To determine implementation practices to support student learning of the standards – they want to know the current state of affairs and what's happening in the working world that relates to what students need to know

Niebling explained how the framework of the survey was set up and that information was taken from other common core surveys in the development of this one.

Niebling went through the components of the survey to explain the intent of each section. The beginning of the survey is geared toward all stakeholders. There also will be sections for general feedback on the standards. Survey-takers can give feedback on each individual literacy standard or as whole.

He explained that non-educators would be taken to different parts of the survey at various points, so the department could receive specific information regarding implementation of the core and professional development from educators.

Other aspects of the survey will break down each of the standards and ask for feedback on them individually. The group discussed how much allowance there should be for survey-takers to rate their perceptions and feelings about the existing standards and what course of action the department could take if survey results show the current standards are unfavorable.

Niebling told the group the survey would be developed in a way that department officials would be prepared to act upon whatever the outcome is in regards to the literacy standards and whether the current standards need to be changed.

Martens said the survey would help the department gather information about any potential gaps in the standards with what's in them compared to what's being implemented in the classroom. It will not guarantee more money for professional development, but it will help the department gather more evidence to make a recommendation on changes to standards.

In addition to the survey, there will be at least two public forums and a focus group to gather public input regarding the literacy standards.

Literacy Standards Review Team members were given homework to examine all aspects of the draft survey, specifically the questions and decide whether any needed to be changed, combined or added. Team members were asked to consider the number of questions that needed to be asked to gain the data that is necessary versus the time survey-takers would take to complete the survey. Team members also need to determine what is reasonable for the amount of time survey-takers should spend on the survey.